

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PRISONERS



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PAC RENOUNCES COUNTER- DEMONSTRATION

In August, the PAC announced a march in London on November 26 in solidarity with Irish PoWs on the date of the anniversary of the execution of the Manchester martyrs.

This march and its slogans — Solidarity with Irish PoWs, PoW status and Amnesty for all Irish Political Prisoners and Brits Out of Ireland were well detailed in the August/September issue of PAC News.

At the same time, the PAC called on all English left-wing groups to make this march a priority and to mobilise nationally for this date — a date which does not clash with any other activity on Ireland and of which we had given four months notice.

With the announcement by the Prime Minister of torture, James Callaghan, that there will not be an autumn election, there remains no obstacle to mass national mobilisation by all anti-imperialists for November 26.

In London, the PAC formed a central march mobilising committee of representatives of political organisations which had responded favourably to our call for mobilisation: they were RCG, RCI, WRP, IMG, and SWP.

STUNTS

Now, over a month since this mobilising committee was set up, it is possible to see that the same diversionary stunts used by some elements to attempt to wreck our very successful July 9 march, have been wheeled out again by some section of the IMG and SWP who supported the ludicrous acts of petty bourgeois individualism in the House of Commons and elsewhere in July.

In Glasgow an organisation calling itself the 'Irish Defence League' announced in the middle of September that it was going to have a march on Ireland on November 25, the day before the PAC's march. The IDL is supported by IMG, in the guise of Socialist Unity.

When the PAC expressed astonishment at this diversion, IMG argued for bringing forward or putting back the date by one week.

They resolutely refused to call

off a march which could only have the practical effect of ensuring that the national mobilisation called for by the PAC was rendered ineffectual in Scotland.

Furthermore IMG chairman of the IDL, Martin O'Leary, tried to prevent a resolution of support for the PAC march being put to a public meeting in Glasgow on September 26.

A member of the Scottish Nationalist Party who was present wrote to the PAC: 'After the meeting he (ie, the RCG comrade who had read out the resolution) protested to the chairman and was subjected to a stream of filth and abuse from the chairman... I feel that you should let this matter be known and expose this sectarianism of people like Socialist Unity using the "Irish Troubles" for their own ends.'

At a meeting of the PAC march mobilising committee in London on October 4 this matter was raised with the IMG representative who stoutly defended the action of the Glasgow meeting's chairman and gave full support to the march in Glasgow.

UNDERTAKING

He refused to give an undertaking that the march would be called off or put back to a date which did not conflict with November 26.

The SWP representative gave full support to this position and to the Glasgow demonstration.

He also refused to give an undertaking that SWP would mobilise nationally. Instead he said we would get something which he called a 'national profile' — presumably like Cadbury's Milk Flake.

He did not deny that an SWP

member had attacked the PAC at a meeting in Cricklewood with an RAC speaker but said this attack had arisen from the member's 'ignorance' (sic) of our work.

He said that in any case the comrade was not speaking as a member of the SWP but as a trade unionist!

In view of the totally unsatisfactory response of the IMG and SWP on the question of national mobilisation for November 26, they were expelled from the London mobilising committee until such times as their national organisations produced a principled commitment to the demonstration.

So far this has not been received.

In Edinburgh, IMG and SWP used the march mobilising committee to call for support for the Glasgow march.

RCG and WRP members then withdrew from this bogus committee to form a true march mobilising committee — for November 26.

It may seem unnecessary in a prisoner paper to detail the sordid manoeuvres of these pseudo-socialists.

SERIOUS ISSUE

However, the central committee of the PAC has decided to publicise this because of the very great seriousness of the prisoner issue.

In the last few weeks screws have run amok in the H Blocks seriously injuring many prisoners and, while the morale of the prisoners remains high, the danger of death or irreversible physical or mental injury is real.

In England, prisoners are on the blanket in Albany and Wakefield for repatriation. Large numbers of PoWs here are entering their sixth, seventh and eighth month in solitary confinement.

We know that amongst true anti-imperialists there is a sincere concern for the PoWs and a real feeling of solidarity with them in their struggles and with the struggle of the Irish nation as a whole for freedom and self-determination.

We know from the response

to our initiatives and those of Sinn Féin over the last year that this support can be mobilised in a disciplined and meaningful way.

Also yet progress is slow, not only because of our struggle against the tremendous propaganda powers of the British government but because of the duplicity and treachery of our so-called friends and defenders.

July 9 and November 26 have truly exposed the SWP and IMG.

They are not interested in Ireland, only in their own political influence. That is why they support the Glasgow counter-demonstration not because they really believe that it will add to support for November 26, but only a political idiot would believe that supporters will travel from Scotland to march in London for something they marched for in Glasgow the week before.

No.

Their real reason for supporting it is simply to increase their own political influence in Irish politics and amongst the Irish community in Britain with a view to the general election.

They have no intention of letting the potential support which exists be channelled into support for principled Irish organisations like Sinn Féin and the PAC.

For this reason also, SWP and IMG are using meetings to call for support for the clownish International Tribunal — a political joke which has been condemned by both the PAC and Sinn Féin in Britain.

SWP recently organised a speaking tour for a member of the RAC!

In London the RAC speaker was allowed only five minutes to speak.

PAC ATTACKED!

At one of the meetings, the chair called for support for the International Tribunal and publicly attacked the PAC!

In Southampton a supporter of the PAC described the RAC speaker as being under some kind of 'citizens arrest' by the SWP member who had travelled down from London.

Needless to say the SWP has never offered to organise a speaking tour for a PAC speaker.

On their expulsion from the London mobilising committee, both IMG and SWP representatives promised 'full support' for November 26.

We will see what this amounts to. In some areas of the country, rank and file members of both groups are working in a principled way to mobilise.

The PAC would like to make its position very clear: We want full national mobilisation for November 26. We have authorised march mobilising committees to be set up throughout England, Scotland and Wales only for this purpose. We have particularly asked that no initiatives be undertaken which could possibly interfere with the national demonstration whether they be other marches, meetings or pickets of any kind.

We regard all activities aimed

at cashing in on our publicity and work for this date as being counter-revolutionary stunts.

The PoWs in Ireland and England have called for mass mobilisation to which the PAC has responded.

Will the sectarians of the British radical left show themselves capable of responding to that call?

The health and the lives of hundreds of fellow socialists depends on the answer to that question.

It is an answer for which we shall have to wait until November 26.

Let it be a clear and unequivocal affirmation of your solidarity with Irish PoWs in their campaign for political status and repatriation.

It is your duty as human beings, as socialists and as revolutionaries.

Lawless and his reputation

GERY LAWLESS, one of the prime movers behind the so-called International Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland sent a solicitor's letter threatening legal proceedings against News Line newspaper as a result of the PAC statement condemning the stunts launched in July to detract support from the July 9 march.

Lawless alleges in the letter that the statement was a slur on his reputation as a 'journalist'. Needless to say the comrades in News Line stood by the statement and nothing further has been heard from this self-publicist.

The para-legalistic mumbo-jumbo of the International Tribunal has obviously brought a sudden rush of blood to the head of the convener of the legal sub-committee of the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland (sic).

It remains to be seen how many other members of this theatrical entertainment are similarly suffering from *folle grandeur* on an international scale.



The PAC organised a three-hour picket on Wakefield jail on Saturday 23 September in support of PoWs on the blanket there (see statement below) and of Billy Armstrong who is asking for a transfer to Ireland so that he may see his seriously-ill father. The picket was attended by 20 people, including prisoners' relatives as well as members of RCG and Leeds and Sheffield branches of JTOM who had also picketed the jail the week before. Hundreds of leaflets were handed out to visitors and passers by and these included the statement from Wakefield PRO.

PAC NEWS

WHY POLITICAL STATUS?

THIS is the second issue of the *PAC News*. The first issue published at the end of August sold out within two weeks and the PAC would like to thank all those who sold and all those who bought what we hope will turn out to be a really successful campaigning paper for Irish PoWs.

The demonstrations held in solidarity with PoWs have shown that anti-imperialists everywhere have taken up the challenge and the threat represented by the British government's taking away of political status in the jails of the Six Counties.

The Brits are trying to pretend that Irish revolutionaries are criminals while criminals in the Brit army are never even brought before the courts, let alone convicted.

The publicity around the case of Willie Gallagher, largely due to the tremendous efforts made by his family and friends in Strabane and by his own courageous hunger strike, have exposed for the first time on mass scale the nature of 'justice' meted out in the courts of the Six Counties.

Even in the face of this unmistakeable injustice, the usual attempts were made by British lefties and liberals to fudge the issue and turn it into one of 'censorship' at the BBC.

Thus Willie's father complained that at the Press conference he was invited to attend in London, and on the way to which he was arrested and held under the Terrorising Act, he was told that he would not be allowed to discuss his son's case — only the censorship of the play based on it!

This at a time when Willie was on hunger strike in Long Kesh as a result of the very bad beatings he had got from screws.

This is yet another example of the subtle ploys of the Brit ruling classes to defuse political issues connected with Ireland and to turn them into more manageable channels.

For the PoWs in England, the issue of political status is really a vital one.

Their demand for repatriation is not just a demand for something which will lighten the burden of visiting for families but is a demand to serve their sentences with large numbers of their own comrades so that they will benefit from a solidarity and support they cannot get now, scattered as they are throughout the top security jails of England and subjected to sudden moves to local jails where they are held in solitary often under the most brutal and sordid conditions.

At the moment, four prisoners are 'on the blanket' in Albany demanding repatriation. In Wakefield blanket protesters are being held in 'F' wing in control units and they have been joined by Jimmy Ashe and Paul Norrey who are being punished because they smashed the light in their cells which is left burning night and day to make sleep difficult if not impossible.

Meanwhile, two other Wakefield prisoners, Vincent Donnelly and Sean Hayes were whisked out to Armley jail, Leeds under Rule 43, 'Good Order and Discipline'.

It is against this kind of arbitrary brutality that the PAC has campaigned for six years.

This campaign will go on whatever the intimidation or provocation, until all PoWs in England are repatriated, all PoWs have political status and until they are all freed at last and Ireland is united and British rule ended.

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Special Branch holds 'An Cumman Cabrach' official

MICHAEL HOLDEN, former national organiser of Provisional Sinn Féin, and now chairman of An Cumman Cabrach was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on Sunday August 20, on his return from Germany.

Initially he was held because it was thought there was some connection between his trip and the bombing of British Army bases over the same weekend.

Michael's innocence was quickly established, thanks to the well oiled police machine both here and in W. Germany and his friends corroborated his story of a purely social visit some 200 miles from where the bombings took place.

Nevertheless, Michael was held for a total of 6 days during which time Special Branch officers used the opportunity to question him again and again about his political contacts in the Republican movement, British

left and Prisoners Aid Committee.

They also showed a degree of interest in his trade union activities as secretary of Kodak (Hemel Hempstead) branch of the cine technicians' union ACTT.

Following his arrest, there was a speedy response from socialists and trade unionists in his home town.

Resolutions of protest were sent to Hemel Trades Council

from SOGAT and ACTT branches calling for an emergency meeting. Plans to picket Ealing police station where he was being held, were well under way when Michael was released, on Friday 25th.

A picket of the local *Hemel Hempstead Gazette* was called on Saturday morning after they had carried a story under the headline 'Former Terrorist Organiser Under Arrest'.

The picket, organised by the Troops Out Committee was well attended, notably by six members of the Labour Party GMC

as well as members of the trades council.

This local response to Michael's arrest and Press victimisation, although by no means a 'mass working class response', has gone a long way to show the type of politicisation that has taken place around Ireland in the Hemel Hempstead labour movement over the last few years.

Michael's union branch has now called upon the trades council to organise a labour movement inquiry into the uses of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Wakefield PoWs expose Control Units

OVER THE past few years, the British gutter Press have been raising the hypocritical cry of 'human rights' for 'Soviet dissidents'. The imperialist Press tells us about the inhumane treatment of Soviet dissidents while at the same time they themselves subject Irish political prisoners to inhumane treatment and deny them their basic human rights.

In Wakefield prison, for example, Irish political prisoners have been subjected to physical attacks, degrading treatment, isolation, refusal of medical treatment etc. The normal prison regime in Wakefield is made deliberately more punitive for political prisoners, the intention is to try and break the spirit of the political prisoners as they have failed in their attempts to criminalize them.

Four Irish political prisoners have died in English prisons since 1974 and despite this there has been no outcry from such liberal bourgeois organisations as Amnesty International, the NCCL and the Howard League for Penal Reform.

The main weapon being used against the PoWs in Wakefield prison at the present time is the 'control unit'. The history of these units goes back to 1972, when a conference took place at the Home Office in which the top Home Office psychiatrist, named Straker, put forward the view that over the next ten to fifteen years the prison population would become more politicised by the influence of the more politically-aware prisoners, i.e. Irish Republican Prisoners. The Home Office was concerned that some provision should be made to isolate such prisoners from the mass of the prison population.

The first prisoners to be put in the control unit were not political prisoners but ordinary prisoners who were used as guinea pigs to test the units. But following a public outcry against the use of the control units in Wakefield and other prisons, due to the mental state of the prisoners who had been subjected to sensory deprivation, the Home Office was forced to close the units down.

The annual prison report for 1975 states, 'There had perhaps been an underestimation of the skill and ability of the staffs of the various dispersal prisons to contain trouble makers without recourse to special accommodation.'

Accordingly, at the same time it was decided to devote the control unit accommodation at Wakefield to use for those prisoners who have to be 'segregated in their own interests from the ordinary prison population.'

When the public outcry had died out, the Home Office re-opened the Control unit, and it is being used against political and non-political prisoners. This time, the Home Office were a bit more discreet about the opening of the unit, as they separated it into two sections; one section was all fitted out with dining tables, TV, table-tennis etc., and was used to accommodate the really bad sex cases. The other section was the old control unit with one or two minor changes, but

basically it was the oppressive and destructive control unit of old.

The building is no longer called the 'control unit', but is known by its new name 'F wing'. The prison authorities are very proud of 'F wing' and are willing to show visitors and MPs around the place but they are only shown around the section that accommodates the sex cases. There is obviously a high level conspiracy between the Home Office and the prison governor, and the official policy is to deny to the public and Press that the 'control unit' is back in use.

Irish political prisoners that have been in the control unit for long periods have experienced spells of dizziness and disorientation. When Mick Murray was released into the normal prison regime after spending 77 days in the control unit, he was unable to talk to his comrades for 3 days, and then only in a very slow low voice.

Most prisoners are locked up in their cells for 24 hours a day, as there's a rule enforcing strict silence at all times and if prisoners break this rule they are punished by being refused exercise.

The cell windows are blocked up with only two small squares to let a bit of air in, the cells are made as featureless as possible, the walls are rendered and painted white and beds are taken out early in the morning.

The cells have to be scrubbed out each night before the beds are allowed back in and if the prisoner refuses to scrub the cell he is given an extra seven days in the unit.

The regime is designed to break the prisoner over a long period of time so that they become mentally incapable of giving the authorities any more problems.

At the present time Paul Norrey and Ray McLaughlin are being held in the control unit. Ray is 'on the blanket' in order to highlight the conditions of the PoWs in Wakefield prison and is demanding to be repatriated to a prison in Ireland.

We express our solidarity to all our comrades in the imperialist jails.

pro Republican prisoners
Wakefield

CONNOLLY MUDDLE

THE Connolly Association in London did not support the PAC demands for political status and amnesty at the May 5 meeting in London nor did they mobilise for July 9. For this reason, and quite rightly, the PAC has characterised them as 'pro-imperialist'.

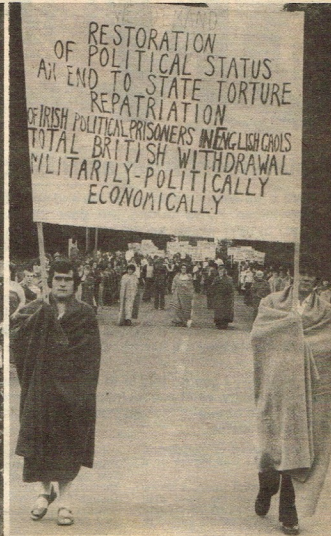
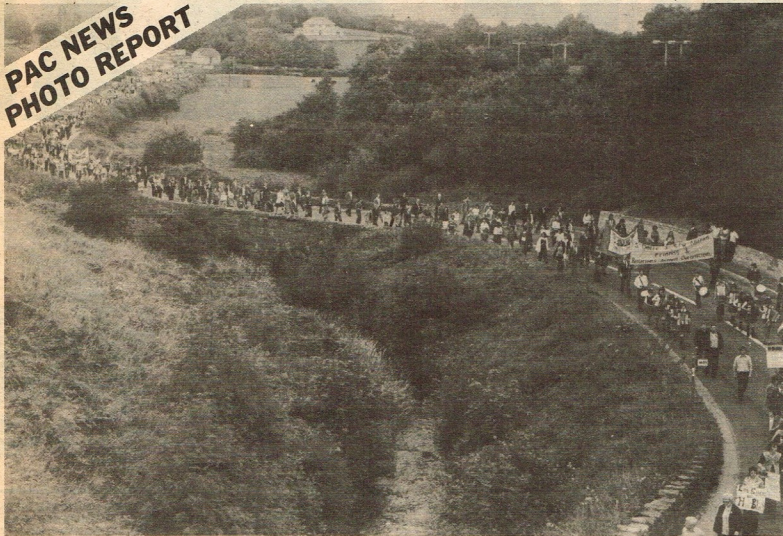
Now the national organiser has written to the PAC to say that they will not be mobilising

for November 26 because we called them 'pro-imperialist'!

A case of getting your ideological knickers in a twist.

The national organiser did promise to advertise our meeting in their paper.

Their pathetic contribution to the prisoner struggle is a gross insult to the revolutionary whose name they have usurped.

PAC NEWS
PHOTO REPORT

20,000 on Dungannon March

ON SUNDAY 27 August over 20,000 people walked the six miles from Coalisland to Dungannon in solidarity with Irish PoWs. The march was organised by Tyrone Relatives Action Committee on the 10th Anniversary of the first Civil Rights march.

Ten years ago 3,000 marched for civil rights and were batonned out of Dungannon by the RUC.

This year, over 20,000 people filled the square to support the revolutionary demands put forward by Tyrone RAC and carried on the banner which led the procession. Restoration of political status and an end to state torture. Repatriation of Irish political prisoners in English jails. Total British withdrawal, militarily, politically and economically.

The march was led by blanket-clad relatives of PoWs who walked in an 'H' formation.

Relatives Action Committees

throughout the Six Counties supported the march as did Sinn Féin branches, IRSP and many Irish organisations including the Irish Civil Rights Association.

Prisoners Aid Committee was one of the sponsors of the march. Jackie Kaye of the PAC spoke in Dungannon where she described the treatment given to Irish PoWs in England.

She reminded the crowd that four of them had died and said that a mass campaign of solidarity like the one she had participated in was necessary to defend the prisoners and bring them home to Ireland alive.

She said that the Brits had never been able to rule Ireland except by brutality and repression.

The campaign for political status was a crucial part of the campaign to drive the Brits out of Ireland and to free the prisoners.

At the meeting messages of

support and solidarity from prisoners in H Block and Armagh were read by Martin McKenna, an ex-H Block prisoner and Mrs Nellis, who has a son in H Block.

One of the most impressive things about the march was the tremendous support it received from prisoners' relatives and their obvious enthusiasm and optimism.

The speaker from Belfast RAC, Maura McCrory, whose 16-year-old son is currently in prison on remand, spoke forcefully of the shock awaiting Maura when he heard of the support for the prisoners in spite of his propaganda lies that the prisoners were isolated.

Maura also referred to the sufferings of the prisoners in England and invited the crowd to remember them by spitting in the eye of the next RUC man or Brit they saw.

Other speakers were Frank Maguire, MP, Richard Bihal from Sinn Féin, Bernadette McAliskey and Brendan Gallagher, father of Willie Gallagher, who told the crowd that last year he had been arrested no less than 183 times as the Brits tried to intimidate him into stopping his campaign on behalf of his son.

Tyrone RAC is to be congratulated on the success of the march.

- RESTORE POLITICAL STATUS!
- WITHDRAW BRITISH TROOPS!
- REPATRIATE IRISH PRISONERS!
- END STATE TORTURE!

The support shown for principles demands around a campaign on the prisoners by the turnout in Ireland on August 27 and in England on July 9 must not be diverted or dissipated.

The PAC is hoping for a large turnout on November 26, our

Day of solidarity with Irish PoWs on the anniversary of the execution of the Manchester martyrs.

The march will assemble at Hyde Park at 2 p.m. for the march to Clerkenwell Green.

Speech to the rally from Jackie Kaye, PAC

I BRING you greetings and solidarity from Irish Prisoners of War in England.

What does it mean to be a PoW of the British government in England?

It means that you are held for up to two years and over in solitary like Brendan Dowd and Joe Duffy and Liam MacLarnon.

It means that you can be held in a control unit in conditions of sensory deprivation like Stephen Nordonne, Paul Norney and Michael Murray.

It means that you can be beaten by other prisoners, you can be beaten by warders, you can be beaten by policemen and the courts will ignore it because they don't regard the beating of an Irish prisoner as an offence under English law.

It means that you can be separated from your family who can only visit you maybe once or twice a year.

It means that when your family travels from Limerick or from Donegal, from Belfast or from Derry, they arrive at the jail to be treated as though they were criminals.

It means that they are searched not only before and after the visit, but that they, unlike the families of any of the other forty thousand prisoners in England have to sit across a table and try to maintain some feeble kind of family contact, talking to their sons and their husbands through a thick cardboard screen or through glass, with screws sitting on each side making notes of the conversation.

There are few fates in this world more terrible than to be a prisoner of the British government.

THE COST

We know of the conditions of the men in H Block and of their heroic struggle.

We also know of the cost of that heroic struggle in terms of human life.

We know and remember today Michael Gaughan, murdered

in Parkhurst prison in 1974.

We remember Proinsias Stagg murdered in Wakefield prison in 1976.

Noel Jenkinson murdered in Leicester prison in 1976.

Sean O Conaill murdered in Parkhurst in 1977.

What did these prisoners give their lives for?

They gave their lives for the right to serve their sentences in their own country.

RIGHT

They gave their lives for the right to be treated as human beings.

They gave their lives to be treated as what they are: political prisoners.

And all of these rights have been and are denied to Irish political prisoners in England.

We have seen every dirty criminal in the British army convicted before the courts in this country — and God knows it's few enough — transferred to serve his sentence in England.

Yet Irish political prisoners taken before the courts of British Imperialism have mock show trials and political trials which would have brought cries of horror from the British government if they had been happening in another country.

Not a single one of these prisoners since 1975 has been given the right to serve his sentence in his own country.

This is what the prisoners in England are demanding: political status and repatriation.

This is why so many of them now in Albany, in Parkhurst, in Wormwood Scrubs, in Gartree and Wakefield and Long Lartin are now in solitary confinement; because they are on protest demanding the right to serve their sentence in their own country.

I ask you to campaign and to fight for the prisoners in England along with the men in H Block, the women in Armagh, the prisoners in Crumlin and the prisoners in Free State jails as well.

So that we don't have to bring

any more of our prisoners back from England in coffins.

We have brought four of them back to Ireland dead.

We can stand together and fight together and bring the rest of them home alive and free which is what we are here today for.

We know that the British government have chosen to attack the Irish revolution in their attempt to break the spirit of and degrade the prisoners.

We know that the issue of political status goes far beyond whether a man will wear his own clothes or receive a food parcel.

The issue of political status is to do with the status of the struggle outside the jails.

POLITICAL

For what is going on in Ireland today is a political struggle, a revolutionary struggle, a war of national liberation and what we are campaigning for is not only human and decent treatment for them in the jails, we are campaigning for the freedom

of the prisoners, for the freedom of Ireland and for an end to British imperialism in our country.

This great demonstration today is a massive demonstration of solidarity with the prisoners and solidarity with the struggle for Irish freedom.

STRUGGLE

And we must go on and must go forward from this until the British are driven out of Ireland.

For they have only been able to rule it for the last 800 years by the use of torture, repression, victimisation, harassment and murder.

And that's the only way they're ever going to be able to rule this country.

The British are incapable of ruling Ireland peacefully.

And so we must fight to end British imperialism in Ireland, and to struggle towards that victory.

Freedom for the prisoners, freedom for Ireland and peace and justice.

ON THE BLANKET

A statement from an H Block PoW

TO GIVE a full detailed account of life and conditions endured by Republican PoWs during the past 20 months of the 'Blanket' protest would be an impossible task, even if the circumstances and conditions here permitted.

Therefore I hope to outlay the present situation which exists within the H Block of Long Kesh as it is of more importance and immediate concern. I hope to be able to point out and impress upon you just how barbaric and inhuman the conditions are within the H Blocks, also the psychological and physical effects they are having upon those who endure them daily.

The best way I can do this is to attempt to describe, to the best of my ability, what can be incorrectly termed as a normal day in the life of one of the 350 PoWs 'on the blanket protest' for political status.

My day began this morning at 6.30a.m. when I was awake by a terrible din.

It was the usual thing, a screw standing between the steel grill (which divides the two wings) deliberately hammering the grill with his baton.

The noise that this created was tremendous, especially in the early morning silence, it echoed throughout each wing in the block, awakening everyone. This hammering and banging was kept up by two or three screws for almost an hour — each screw taking his turn to make noise.

The continual din sent men up to their doors screaming and shouting to the screws to stop the banging, but the screws simply hurled back abuse and continued banging, sometimes changing the steady banging to the drumbeat of an orange tune.

It must have been about 7.30a.m. when the banging stopped and the screws came around the cells to do the first headcount of the day. They gave the heavy steel cell doors a good rattle with their batons as they checked each cell and extinguished the cell light which had been deliberately kept on all through the night.

It was roughly 7.30a.m. and already the whole H Block was filled with tension and frustration.

The night guard screws left the block and the day guard came around the cells doing a headcount, in much the same manner as the night guard had. The first thing that the day guard does was to remove the mattresses and blankets from the cells.

I arose from my bed, as the screws would soon be coming round to my cell. I was on second day of what is called 'c.c.' (cellular confinement).

This occurs every eleven days, when I am charged with refusing to wear prison garb; the governor and several screws come to my cell door and carry out a Kangaroo court, which is really farcical.

I am naturally found guilty and sentenced to three days 'c.c.' — two weeks' loss of remission and the loss of all privileges etc., even though I am already held in total solitary confinement, never having any privileges.

The loss of remission is an added punishment as is the loss of my mattress and bedding at 7.30a.m. leaving my cell bare.

I start to fold my blankets which are filthy and made of horse hair, which constantly agitates my bare skin. While folding my blankets I discovered a half-dozen white maggots on them and at least half a dozen more on my mattress.

I have no bed as the screws removed all the beds from the cells over five weeks ago.

Since then over 300 of us have been lying on the floor upon filthy damp flea-ridden mattresses. My cell door opened just as I was folding the filthy blankets, two criminal orderlies removed my bedding as the screws looked on. They threw the bedding in a heap outside the cell door.

I caught a glimpse of the food trolley sitting in the middle of the wing with the breakfasts sitting on it. It's the same procedure every meal — the food trolley is left to sit in the middle of the wing until the food grows cold.

The screws make sure that we know the food is there to agitate and frustrate us — this causes a lot of men to yell and scream out the doors to the screws to serve the breakfast, but the screws pay no heed, increasing the over-tensed atmosphere and frustrations.

Once my bedding was out of the cell the screw slammed the cell door shut, the heavy metal door banged closed, sending an explosive boom around my cell and throughout the entire wing.

A few minutes later the screws came around the cells again (the excuse of checking how many mattresses there were. Leaving every cell, they deliberately slammed

each door as hard as they could to create as much noise as possible.

The breakfast was finally served around the cells, cold tea, cold porridge, with two rounds of bread set on top of the porridge. The bread was soggy, having absorbed the milk that was on the porridge.

The whole breakfast was inedible, ending up on the pile of rubbish and decaying waste food in the corner of the cell, which in itself seems to testify to the standard of previous food.

After a while the plates were collected to the accompaniment of more door banging.

What to do now is the question. It's either sit in the corner of the cell or pace the floor.

I chose to walk — being the least boring. The stench in the cell is almost overwhelming.

There is a terrible smell rising out of the pile of putrefying rubbish in the corner, also from our unwashed bodies of ten weeks. The stench of excreta and urine is particularly evident.

The sickening stench is increased by the tremendous heat which rises from the heating pipes in the cells. (It is important to mention that during the winter the heat in these pipes is kept to a minimum.) The stench and heat combined leaves the air in the cell heavy and barely breathable.

Although I am naked all the time save for a blanket or a towel the heat is so bad that I continually perspire. The cell is full of fat bloating flies which thrive on the rubbish and multiply in the heat.

The heat, stench, humidity, filth and insects leave the inside of our cells resembling the interior of a jungle swamp. Our cells are empty of all furniture as the prison authorities removed our beds, tables, lockers and chairs etc. from our cells several weeks ago for no other reason than purely to make life harder for us.

This means that we must sit and sleep and even eat our meals upon a filthy floor, like animals.

We find this highly degrading. We are degraded in many ways.

Our cells are searched and ransacked regularly. During each search, we are subjected to a strip-search, even though we are almost completely naked. This means that we must take off our blanket, drop it on the floor, we then must turn a full circle with our arms raised in the air to allow the screws to visually scrutinise our naked bodies.

This is extremely degrading, especially when the screws make snide remarks concerning our nudity. The screws really set out to try to destroy our dignity and self-respect.

Surely the most degrading aspect of our daily life is the carrying out of the basic human necessity of going to the toilet. In our circumstances this perfectly natural

act is very degrading, embarrassing and made almost animal-like.

With two men in a small cell a man must retreat to a corner of the cell in full view of his cell-mate to defaecate — there is no alternative, each man must suffer this terrible indignity and put up with the resulting stench in the small cell.

This indignity does not finish at that; as each day we are given two sheets of toilet paper, which is not enough, sometimes we have to use a page of a letter.

If you have no letters then you must remain dirty.

The screws think this is a great joke.

For the last seven weeks we have been putting our body waste and urine out the windows. We have been forced into this position by the prison administration, it was they who refused to empty the overflowing poes in our cells.

It was the screws who came into our cells adopting jackboot tactics, kicking poes around the cells, leaving the filthy smelling contents lying all over our bedding and the cell floor. We once again were simply left with no other alternative.

To carry out this unpleasant job we must fit the lid of a po between the concrete bars, and using it as a funnel, pour the urine out the window.

With excreta, urine, the filth of our cells, our unwashed bodies and the multitude of maggots, flies and fleas the danger of a health risk is inevitable, especially in the almost unbearable heat of the cell.

The warm weather only adds to the danger. The overall danger of a massive outbreak of disease seems certain should the present situation continue.

The prison administration's answer to this is to spray the cells with extremely strong disinfectant.

This is done by criminal orderlies who are dressed like spacemen in protective clothing, breathing masks, goggles and spraying apparatus attached to their backs. The orderlies spray the cells while we stand at the back of the cell, the fumes from this extremely strong disinfectant have a similar effect to CS gas.

After a few minutes we scurry to the windows gasping and choking for air, our eyes smarting and watering. Many men have even been temporarily blinded and fits of vomiting are quite common. We have no escape from this.

The ground outside of cells is covered with lime, when this is put down it sends up puffs of white dust and strong fumes ensue.

The criminal orderlies and screws dressed in protective nylon overalls hose down the outside and, occasionally, the inside of each wing with a high-powered hose.



Should we be too slow to shut our windows the hose is inserted and we are hosed down. The jet of water soaks our bedding and the entire cell.

At night we have been wakened by a jet of water gushing in through the slit at the top of our doors, again soaking our bedding and cell, leaving us to pace the floor throughout the night being unable to return to our soaking wet mattresses.

Again this is part of the strong-arm tactics adopted and implemented by the prison administration in an attempt to break our spirit. The strong-arm stuff has abated recently to be replaced by a more subtle and psychological approach, which is usually as disturbing and effective.

Back in the wing the dinner arrives at roughly 12.00a.m. The block comes alive with the prospect of 'maybe' a half-decent meal.

Once again the usual play is implemented; the dinner being left in the wing at least twenty minutes. Again this causes a terrible ruckus from the cells.

Most men are understandably starving. The dinner is brought round the cells, the wing is thick with the smell of 'Arabie' which the screws had just sprayed.

We lift our dinners off the trolley and retreat to a corner of the cell.

I sat myself on the ground and attempt to salvage a part of the cold dinner. There is a taste of air-freshener off the food, two thirds of it joins the rubbish pile.

A poor meal only serves to build up more frustration within the block. But this eats after the screws had just sprayed.

Again the wing shows signs of life and activity gradually builds up again or discussion ensues. This helps to ease the pressure and tensions that have built up in the men throughout the morning.

It also aids those who may be bored, depressed or even despairing. Spirits rise again only to subside when the distant jingle of keys is heard, signalling the return of the screws.

The screws arrive back in the wing and door slamming, wall hammering and taunts start all over again. The screws immediately set about carrying out cell searches and cell moves, never allowing us to settle for more than a few weeks in the same cell.

It is only human that not everyone can get on together. The screws know this and they also know who gets on whose nerves.

They deliberately put men who don't get on too well into the same cell — again this is an example of psychological torture.

The make-up of the H Block is designed in such a way that sound

H Block prisoners challenge Brit Government

FOUR POWs in H Block are to bring their cases before the European Commission for Human Rights.

The cases involve breaches of several articles of the Convention.

Article 6 which forbids additional punishment without trial — this relates to the fact that PoWs are sentenced to three days solitary on bread and water as a matter of routine every 14 days.

Article 3 which forbids inhuman and degrading treatment and torture — this relates to the fact that PoWs are denied reading and writing material, access to TV and radio, exercise and association and the use of canteen and lavatory.

(It is as a result of this refusal that PoWs have since March this year refused to stop out and wash in order to highlight their conditions.)

Article 9 which guarantees freedom of conscience — the deprivation of political status will be challenged under this article.

Articles 8 and 10 which guarantee the right to correspond and to give and receive information — this relates to the refusal to allow and to give

Article 11 which guarantees the right of association — this will challenge the constant holding of PoWs in solitary.

The cases will allege discrimination in view of the fact the prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh sentenced before 1976 are treated differently.

It is expected that the lawyers acting for the PoWs may ask the Commission to speed up its procedures because of the dangerous and critical conditions in which the prisoners are being held.

The struggle of the H Block prisoners



travels and seems to magnify as it echoes through each wing.

The level of noise is fantastic. A door slamming in another wing can be heard quite plainly when all is quiet.

If one considers the banging of walls and heavy doors slamming all day long in what is likeable to an echo chamber, then one can get some indication of the level of noise that exists in the wings.

What effect is this having on men?

Long periods of silence then sudden and sustained bursts of noise and vice-versa.

Many men just aren't able to cope with the noise factor, this can be seen in those who were at their cell doors this morning yelling and almost pleading with the screw to stop the incessant hammering.

On the other hand, there are men who just sit in their cells like zombies, never speaking, never shouting. They just remain totally silent no matter what is happening.

Is this normal for supposedly healthy young men? To be living like a zombie or screaming like a lunatic.

There is no escape from your surroundings here, except for a solitary half-hour to go to Mass each week.

Even in religious matters, the prison authorities use the opportunity to get us to wear prison garb. If we don't wear the prison trousers to Mass, then we don't get going to Mass at all.

The screws hand the prison trousers around the cells for mass degrading by giving the large-sized pairs to the smallest men and vice-versa.

I suppose the most worrying thing to us is our health, as we have been in a constant state of degeneration for the past twenty months. We receive no exercise, therefore no fresh air.

These two facts are paramount in the slow collapse of our health.

The rigours of solitary confinement show through quite clearly in the physical state of every man here; everyone's outward appearance is very much alike: bearded with a haggard and pale-looking face, underweight and undernourished.

The list of medical complaints is enormous, the most common being muscular pain, sore and strained eyes, migraine headaches (we have had to cover the bright white walls with tea to cut out the extremely bright glare which is reflected off the walls, giving us headaches and eye trouble) other complaints consist of chest pains, stomach trouble, skin infections with many men being covered with masses of pimples, worms, dandruff, constipation (this is quite bad) we suffer with foot trouble,

besides having flat feet we have 'athlete's foot' and the skin peels off our feet regularly.

Many men take blackouts and dizzy spells. These are only a few of the common medical complaints.

Many men need outside hospital treatment and operations, but they continue to suffer in pain because the prison administration refuses to facilitate them with the proper medical treatment and facilities in the H Blocks nor will they take them out to an outside hospital.

In fact the prison doctor and his so-called medical officers use the sufferings of the PoWs to break the protest. An MO comes around the wings each night but one has literally to beg him for a headache tablet.

The prison doctor has already refused to treat us in our cells. We are blackmailed with our pain and suffering: either put the prison uniform on or suffer — this goes for doctor, dentist or specialist.

We must wear a prison uniform to their surgery. The usual medicine for any complaint is two paracetamol tablets.

Should a man take ill during the night there is an alarm bell in his cell. Sometimes this bell is turned off by a drunken night guard.

Sometimes when it is rung for attention it may take up to an hour before medical aid arrives in the form of an MO, a screw with a white coat — a glorified message boy.

The efficiency of these MOs and the medical staff as a whole can be gauged by the number of corpses that have went out the front gate of this place in coffins.

Back in the wing in the late afternoon, one of the dozens of Governors arrives in the wing to carry out his kangaroo courts. The presence of the Governor sends a lot of men to their cell doors where they rattle on the doors with cups, etc.

I suppose that this is an act of defiance, but it also helps men to release a lot of tensions and frustrations which would otherwise build up in them and explode unexpectedly and violently.

When the Governor leaves the wing calms down again for another while.

Now it's a matter of passing the next hour or so until tea time.

The boredom of sitting in the cell every day of every month and for the past twenty months is indescribable.

Most days, depending on the individual, the boredom can get so bad that you slump into the depths of depression and despair.

Mentally you are confused and exhausted.

Some men may possibly be on the brink of insanity. You have nothing to occupy your mind or pass the time. Such things as radios, TV, books, newspapers, educational material or cigarettes etc. are non-existent.

We are deprived of the smallest thing which may help to pass an hour or ease our hardship. At present we are even deprived of religious material.

All one can do to pass the time or ease the boredom is to walk, sleep or chat with your cell-mate (if you have one) but what can you talk about that hasn't been talked about in the past twenty months of talking.

To walk up and down the cell is exhausting in our condition — four paces turn — four paces turn — even gets dizzy.

There is a window in each cell which one can look out of. It is divided by four concrete slabs which serve as bars allowing only a limited view. When one looks out the window a grilled wire fence is the first sight, then a space of black tarmac leading to a silver

corrugated fence decorated with barbed wire.

The only thing this scenery creates is depression and sore eyes.

In the courtyard of the block a white transit van appears with blacked out windows.

This van is synonymous with the dreaded Punishment Block. When it appears it is to convey someone to the Punishment Block.

There is a regular flow of PoWs to the P block.

The P block is designed and used to crack the PoW. To break his will to resist, to smash his protest.

One should consider the P block in this light.

Reflect on the conditions in the H block that I have mentioned and of how inhuman and unbearable they are.

If the P block is to be a P block and serve as a deterrent or weapon to break men then obviously it must be made harder and more unbearable to live in than H block and quite frankly it is!

Men are sent to P block on framed and flimsy charges.

No Republican PoW is ever found 'not guilty'. The kangaroo court procedure also takes place in the P block. The average time spent in the P block is 4 to 5 days.

But some men have spent as long as 46 days. Recently two young PoWs — Liam Carlin (Derry) and Seany McVeigh (Short Strand) spent 31 days and 25 days apiece.

They did not do anything.

They were just unfortunate to be beaten up by screws who sent them to the P block to hide their injuries and charge them with assault. The most inhuman aspect of the P block is what is termed as No.1 diet (a starvation diet). Every Republican PoW in P block is sentenced to this diet which consists of: for breakfast, two rounds of dry bread and black tea — for dinner, a small bowl of watery soup and half a potato — for tea, the same as breakfast — for supper, nothing.

Men have been subjected to this for many days on a three-day or three-day off basis. This is geared to reduce the physical resistance of the PoW to cower his spirit.

No one speaks in the P block, not even the screws. The eternal silence is nerve shattering.

To empty one's po you must wear prison gear otherwise the contents will eventually flow on to the floor, as the screws will not allow you to empty the po any other way.

The cells consist of a board for a bed, a concrete block for a stool and a concrete slab cemented into the wall serves as a table. In the seclusion of the P block, the PoW is very vulnerable to violent physical attacks from the sectarian and bigoted screws.

Hundreds of PoWs pass through the P block. Many have received severe beatings.

Should a man make a formal complaint that he has been brutalised or assaulted, four or five screws will swear he has not.

The man will receive another sentence for daring to make false allegations against a prison officer and, of course, another beating.

This ensures that no one will complain.

We make no bones about it, the P block is a living hell.

Back in the H block, the tea arrives and we go through the same frustrating and annoying routine.

Tea held until cold, doors banging, banging on walls, men screaming out their doors, the screws hurling sectarian remarks.

The food is served and it is found not only to be cold but meagre in quantity and doctored.

We receive a bowl of soup which is watered down and uneatable.

The tea consists of a boiled egg, small pieces of grease-covered bacon and half a toasted soda plus a mug of luke-warm tea and a few rounds of bread.

It was a disgusting task to even look at this meal.

After tea the wing settled down to await lock-up, when the screws leave the block for the night. Again the boredom sets in. The next few hours are only interrupted by the serving of the supper (a cup of tea and a small scone). When lock-up arrives you can almost feel the relief in the wing. You most certainly can sense it.

As soon as the screws leave the men really come to life (some don't, some remain living their zombie-like existence). The chatting begins out the doors and either an organised discussion, quiz or sing-song will develop.

This bolsters up the sagging spirits and once again lifts those who are depressed or despairing.

These few hours at night are primarily the main reason why our sanity is intact.

The night period passes only too quickly.

A letter from Michael Holden

THE FOLLOWING letter from Michael Holden to his mother was smuggled out of H Block. Mrs Holden has not seen her son for 18 months as he refuses to take his visits in the conditions now in force. Michael is serving a sentence of 18 years. The letter was written in June.

Hello Mum,

Well this is just a few lines I am taking a chance to get out to you. You will understand I am saying no names in it as I would not like to get my comrades into any more trouble than is necessary.

Well, the days are just the same in here, no change whatsoever. But it's a funny thing the way you get used to things.

It is now 15 months since I saw you and the rest of my family. It will be a very happy day for me that day, when we get political status back, and I can put my own clothes back on me, then and only then will I take a visit.

As Mason knows, the British government knows and the world knows that as we sit in this hell hole it is rightly ours.

Mum, they treat us like animals, cold food all the time and into the bargain, half-cooked. What we would give for some home cooking. But Mum, sometimes I eat it, other times I can't as it makes me really sick.

The cells are really like pit heads and the smell is really terrible. I never thought I could really survive this injustice, 24 hours a day, just simply nothing to do. The screws are pigs to us, but at the moment we are always on our guard as you really don't know the second you are going to be hosed down or have a urine pot thrown at you.

They are getting worse on us. Sometimes, when you are at Mass, the screws are in your cells throwing as much dirt as tant as they possibly can. And when you come back you don't have a breath as it chokes you, but we are as hard as nails and it is no problem to us. But it is really rough without the old mattress. But still no problem, I would rather put up with this than wear a criminal uniform.

Well Mum, don't worry about me as I am really OK. I would not have told you all this, as you know yourself I have never said anything to you about this place but, a bloke said to me: 'Let your Mum know what's happening as she really knows a lot.' Well Mum, do you think it will be long before we get our status? Anyone who is taking visits tells us that it's not far off. I hope so anyway, as some of the blokes in here are really bad looking.

Well this is all, Mum, for now, don't send me any more recorded letters as they don't give us our letters. Send some paper hankies in again as you never know my luck — I might get them. I never got the last two parcels you sent. (Some joke these parcels). Tell all in the house I send best wishes to them and look after yourself, and thanks for everything Mum.

God bless you always,
Your loving son,

Michael Holden's father died on October 21. Michael was refused parole to attend the funeral. PAC extends condolences to him and to his mother who recently took part in the making of our film on the Irish Prisoners of War.

PAC SPEAKS AT 'NEWS LINE' CONFERENCE



THE audience at the conference singing 'The International' at the end

ON SUNDAY September 17 at the Wembley Conference Centre, the 'News Line', the daily paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party held a conference on the role of the British Armed Forces vis-a-vis the trade unions.

There were four sections to the conference: The State and Basic Democratic Rights, British Imperialism in Ireland, Police State Preparations in Britain and Trade Unions and the Army Strike Breakers.

Peter Turton of the PAC spoke in the section given over to British Imperialism in Ireland. He called attention to the great numbers of Irish political prisoners held in Britain and Ireland, most of them subjected to conditions of extreme duress.

The Prisoners Aid Committee had been campaigning for six years on behalf of these prisoners and was at present demanding POW status for these heroic men and women, in accordance with the wishes of the prisoners themselves and the Republican movement as a whole.

He remarked that the British imperialist government was trying desperately to criminalise what was a national liberation struggle with a history of 800 years.

FOOTSTEPS

The PAC was following in the footsteps of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who gave their full support to the Fenian struggle of the latter part of the 19th century.

Marx and Engels, plus Marx's daughters Eleanor and Jenny had no hesitation in backing the Fenian struggle, since they posed the problem in terms of national liberation, which, as scientific socialists, they felt bound to support.

Unlike the many pseudo-Marxists of today such as the Communist Party of Great Britain, who were trying to get out of their anti-imperialist duties whilst apparently campaigning on behalf of socialism in other, far-away parts of the world such as Chile and Argentina, Marx

and Engels faced up to imperialism in the country of their residence, even though they recognised that the Irish national liberation movement contained elements which were not socialist.

BOGUS

These bogus socialists were at present in favour of the policy of the British imperialist government, with its campaign for 'a better life for all', as though the national problem did not exist and the Irish people did not have the right to self-determination.

Turton drew attention to the fact that Lenin, as a true Marxist, had supported the Easter Rising of 1916 and contrasted Lenin's stand with that of so much of the so-called left in Britain today who either directly support the British government or adopt policies which fall far short of the correct course of backing the Republican movement.

At present, there is approximately one British soldier to every 30 Irish nationalists in the six counties of north-east Ireland, and yet imperialist propaganda denies it is fighting a war and talks of 'terrorism'.

Imperialism has a POW camp, special 'Diplock' courts, with no jury and an onus thrown on the defendant to prove his or her innocence, with weight given to 'confessions' extracted by police and army brutality, in contravention of the usual British legal procedures, although these had also been 'overlooked' in Britain itself in the case of Irish Republicans.

It was pointed out that since its inception the six county Ulster statelet had been organised, as far as 'law and order' went, on para-military lines.

'CONFESSIONS'

The RUC was not a normal police force but something akin to a fully-fledged army. Yet still the British government refused to admit it was trying a war, it had been condemned in the European Commission for Human Rights for torture and was in direct contravention of the Geneva Agreements of 1949 and

their later protocols, which forbid torture, humiliating or degrading treatment with regard to rebels against the state or national liberation fighters.

Yet the men and women 'on the blanket', whose foul conditions were described, now numbered some 350 persons.

British workers could not stand by and ignore these methods, since they would be used here when the class struggle sharpened. And the same very advanced intelligence-gathering methods would be fully brought into play.



Brendan Gallagher

The speech concluded with a call for support of the PAC motion which forms the theme of the November 26 march in commemoration of the Manchester martyrs: 'We give full support to the right of Irish political prisoners to be treated as Prisoners of War and with the right of those sentenced in England to serve their sentences with their comrades in Ireland. We shall be supporting the day of solidarity with Irish prisoners of war called by the PAC for November 26th and we support the demands of that demonstration. This motion was passed unanimously.

Also speaking at the conference was Brendan Gallagher, father of Willie Gallagher. Brendan outlined his son's fight in Long Kesh (his 50-day hunger strike) and was given a standing ovation.

Carl Churchill, author of the censured BBC play on Willie Gallagher, spoke on the machinations of the BBC with regard to the commentary she wrote as an appendage.

This commentary had been watered down without her consent or that of the producer.

Finally, a statement was read out from the Central Relatives

Action Committee in Belfast on the blanket men and women.

This received unanimous applause, as did a protest from 'Republican News' over the arrest of its staff and, most recently, that of its editor Danny Morrison.

Jim Reilly of the National Executive Committee of Provisional Sinn Féin sent a message of greetings to the conference. This also was warmly applauded.

The conference was a huge success and we thank the 'News Line' and the WRP for once again showing their mettle in support of the PAC and the Republican movement.



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in August to take in the Coalisland-Dunannon march. It includes interviews with prisoners' relatives and ex-prisoners. We hope the film will be ready for showing in early November.

The film is on the campaign for political status and was made

Gartree prisoners moved

Note: Following the riot in Gartree in protest at the drugging of Michael Blake all PoWs have been moved out to other jails. So far we have only managed to ascertain the location of Ronnie McCartney, John McCluskey, Paul Holmes and Peter Short, Gerry Meoley and Phil Sheridan.

COLONEL Robin Evelagh, a former army officer, published a book in July which calls for identity cards to be used in the Six Counties.

He also calls for legislation to compel people to attend two-hour interviews with police or army so that they could be classified as pro or anti-government.

Evelagh commanded the Royal Green Jackets in Belfast in 1972 and 1973.

In the book, *Peacekeeping in a Democratic Society*, the ex-officer suggests that social benefits should no longer be paid by post. Instead, people should be made to draw them at a government office where their identity cards would be scrutinised by soldiers.

Entry to pubs and shops would be on condition of producing the cards.

SIR JOHN Nightingale, who has just retired as Chief Constable of Essex, has been appointed a member of the Parole Board. Little wonder that the rate of parole is so paltry.

OVER 300 policemen 'helped' bailiffs to evict a hundred squatters from a block of old flats in London on August 16. The raid took place in typical fashion at 6a.m. The police brought riot shields, truncheons and bulldozers to knock down corrugated-iron barricades.

Another victory for our wonderful bobbies.

THE TUC Congress in Brighton in September passed a motion of concern about the activities of the Special Branch. The motion was proposed by the Tobacco Workers Union and seconded by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians.

The building up of dossiers on trade unionists was particularly referred to, as were the activities of the Special Patrol Group in harassing strikers.

However, as was to be expected, the trade union leadership was oblivious to the political implications of police surveillance and thoroughly exempted the Irish from expressions of concern, remarking that the activities they complained of 'were nothing to do with terrorism or the alarming circumstances in Northern Ireland'.

Discussion on Ireland was restricted to a pathetic appeal given wide coverage in the imperialist media, for people not to tell Irish jokes and the ritual and meaningless motion of support for the non-existent 'British Life for All Campaign'.

LIVERPOOL council decided to sever links with Odessa, their 'twin' city in the Soviet Union because of the treatment of 'dissidents'.

Liverpool council is evidently unaware that its police have the worst record for the detention of Irish dissidents under the Terrorising Act.

In the circumstances, it would be more appropriate for Odessa council to have cut off relations with Liverpool — we are sure that there are nowhere near 864 people in Odessa who have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, interrogation and isolation for up to 12 days.

That is the number of Irish people who have been held under the Terrorising Act in Liverpool in the last three years. People who live in glass houses . . .

PAC film on Political Status Campaign

'PRISONER OF WAR' is the name of a film which is being made by the Workers Revolutionary Party for the PAC.

The film is on the campaign for political status and was made

in August to take in the Coalisland-Dunannon march.

It includes interviews with prisoners' relatives and ex-prisoners. We hope the film will be ready for showing in early November.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the comrades from the WRP who made the film: Tyrone and Belfast Relatives Action Committees who took part in it and Clara Reilly of the ALJ who allowed her home to be used for it.

The PAC would also like to thank its friends in Belfast, who would probably prefer to remain nameless, without whose hospitality the film would never have been made.

PRISONER NEWS

Solidarity in the jails

We reprint below part of a letter from Geoff Cogan of PROP which originally appeared in News Line.

Dear Editor,

Irish prisoners in English top security prisons are very much part of the prison community and staunch comrades in the cause of prisoners' solidarity. Nowhere was this more dramatically demonstrated than at Hull in September 1976, when prisoners — Irish and English, black and white — stood with arms linked on the prison roof.

I know Irish prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs. Wandsworth and particularly at Parkhurst where I counted many amongst my friends. The personal experience I recounted of Kevin Dunphy being attacked at Parkhurst by another prisoner at the prompting and with the connivance of prison officers, must include the sequel if the point is to be made.

The attack was followed by a

fracas in the exercise yard between other Irish prisoners and a group of prisoners associated with the assailant. The alarm bell went and screws rushed in from all sides to 'break it up' but in fact going out of their way to let the English prisoners get extra blows while the Irish prisoners' arms were pinned. All of them, Irish and English, were then taken down to the punishment block.

During the next few weeks the rest of us in D Wing made ourselves busy discussing the situation and preparing for the prisoners' return. When they eventually came up from the block there was a great welcome in front of the screws — for the Irish prisoners. Their attackers in the yard admitted that they had allowed themselves to be used and joined in the general welcome with a great deal of handshaking and backslapping.

As for Kevin Dunphy's assailant, he did not come up at all but was shipped straight out

to another (and much easier) prison for his own safety.

The impression must not be left that those whom the Home Office brands as 'trouble makers' are looked upon by other prisoners as such. Not at all. They are the first line of defence against abuse of all prisoners. That is why we in PROP salute the Irish prisoners, together with Jake Prescott, Blackie Saxton, Frankie Fraser and all those, 'political' or not, who behave inside prison in a principled manner in support of their fellow men.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your impressive Granwick film shown at the Conference, and on your general attitude towards the National Front.

We have good reason to detest the National Front and the behaviour of National Front screws. But we recognise that it is not National Front screws who are the cause of prison brutality.

The reality is very much the other way round. It is the brutality of the Home Office's prisons which attracts — and needs — creatures like the National Front screws to run them.

To concentrate on the National Front threat to the exclusion of the real enemy — those at the head of our state repressive institutions, and their masters — is to ignore where the real threat of fascism lies. We do not believe that fascism lurks round the corner, but it will arrive — if we let it — through the front door and not the back.

And its foundations are being laid now, not by the National Front thugs but by the Callaghan government and their Tory counterparts, through their army, police and judicial chiefs.

In solidarity,
Geoff Cogan,
National Secretary,
PROP (the National Prisoners' Movement)

Billy Armstrong

At the time of going to press, Billy Armstrong has still not heard whether he will be moved to a jail in Ireland so that he can see his father, who is very seriously ill in hospital in Belfast.

The fact that Billy has five children and that both his parents have been infirm for some time means that during the five and a half years in incarceration in an English jail he has received very few visits.

Two loyalist prisoners from Wakefield have been moved to Belfast to receive their visits in the Crumlin. It remains to be seen whether this same right will be extended to Billy now that his father is seriously ill.

Anne Maguire

Anne Maguire was visited by a consultant in Durham recently and told she should have an immediate operation. Next day the prison told her that she could not have the operation but would receive treatment on the "hospital landing" in the jail.

Albany

POWs in Albany have now received a letter from the Home Office to say that for security reasons they are not allowed to go to mass. They are all told down on the block and refusing to wash in their cells under the gaze of the screws.

THE PAC are organising a picket on December 9, 1.30p.m. at Albany Prison, Isle of Wight.

Category A Plus One



Liam Baker

THREE POWs in Albany — Anthony Cunningham, Busty Cunningham and Liam Baker — went on the blanket at midnight on October 8 in protest at conditions in Albany especially visiting conditions.

All POWs in Albany have been on the block since April in protest at their conditions. Added refinements to their treatment include refusing them permission to go to mass, forcibly shaving their heads refusing to allow them to have books to read.

They have been told that this is a result of their new categorisation 'Category A plus one'.

Sean O Conaill and Noel Jenkinson

OCTOBER 1978 marks the anniversaries of two Irish political prisoners: Sean O Conaill and Noel Jenkinson.

Sean O Conaill died on October 1 last year after suffering extreme pain from advanced cancer which post mortem examination revealed had not been treated at all in jail.

Despite sustained efforts by the PAC, Sean was only moved out of Parkhurst jail 24 hours before his death.

His dying request had been to be allowed to have a visit from Jackie Kaye of the PAC. This was refused by the Home Office and when she arrived at the hospital to which he was taken from jail, he was dead.

Police had already moved his body to the public morgue.

Only after Jackie Kaye arrived at the hospital did the Home Office release news of his death which had occurred the day before.

The PAC arranged for the funeral and his burial, in accordance with his last wishes, took place in Glasnevin cemetery.

OCTOBER 9 is the second anniversary of the death of Noel Jenkinson, who was found dead in his cell in the top security unit of Leicester jail.

An independent autopsy was subsequently refused by the coroner on security grounds.

Noel's political work, both inside and outside jail, will be his true memorial. In a last letter he called for unity behind the Republican movement — a unity which has still not occurred.

In his letters from jail, Noel put forward penetrating analyses of the Irish struggle and showed time and again that the revolutionary in jail remains a revolutionary.

It is clear that his death was a blessed relief for the British government which had sentenced him to a minimum of 30 years in jail following a political show trial.

On October 13, the PAC held a memorial meeting in the Conway Hall, London at which speakers stressed the need to win the campaign for political status and for transfers to Irish jails for Irish POWs in England in order to avert more deaths in the jails of the British government.

It was also stressed by PAC speaker Jackie Kaye that the only fitting memorial for those who have lost their lives in the jails of British imperialism is a free and united Ireland.

Venceremos.

Irish Political Prisoners sentenced in England

Billy Armstrong, life Wakefield
Paddy Armstrong, life Wakefield
Jimmy Ashe, 12 yrs Wakefield
Liam Baker, 20 yrs Albany
James Bennett, 20 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Stevie Blake, 15 yrs Albany
Martin Brady, life Wakefield
Eddie Butler, life Strangeways Manchester
Eddie Byrne, 14 yrs Walton
Hugh Callaghan, life Albany
Sean Campbell, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Sean Canavan, 10 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Pat Christie, 10 yrs Albany
Tony Clarke, 14 yrs Durham
Gerry Conlon, life Wormwood Scrubs
Giuseppe Conlon, 12 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Joe Coughlan, 7 yrs Long Lartin
Martin Coughlan, 14 yrs Parkhurst
Anthony Cunningham, 10 yrs Albany
Busty Cunningham, 20 yrs Albany
Garry Cunningham, 20 yrs Long Lartin
Hugh Doherty, life Durham
Vincent Donnelly, life Wakefield
Brendan Dowd, life Parkhurst
Harry Duggan, life Parkhurst
Kevin Dunphy, 12 yrs Albany
Hugh Feeney, life Long Kesh
Fr Fell, 12 yrs Albany
Noel Gibson, life Parkhurst
Ann Gillespie, 14 yrs Durham
Eileen Gillespie, 14 yrs Durham
Pat Gullifoye, 14 yrs Albany
Pat Hackett, 20 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Sean Hayes, 20 yrs Wakefield
John Higgins, 10 yrs Parkhurst
Paddy Hill, life Parkhurst
Paul Hill, life Gartree
Paul Holmes, life Long Lartin
Garry Hunter, life Gartree
Gerry Kelly, life Long Kesh
Sean Kinsella, life Parkhurst
Tony Lynch, 7 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Liam MacLarnon, 15 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Bernard McCafferty, 16 yrs Parkhurst
Ronnie MacCartney, life Winchester
Con MacFadden, 20 yrs Long Lartin
Richard McKenny, life Long Lartin
Ray MacLaughlin, 12 yrs Wakefield
Brian MacLaughlin, 12 yrs Gartree
John MacCluskey, 10 yrs Winchester
Tony Madigan, 10 yrs Albany
Anne Maguire, 14 yrs Durham
Pat Maguire, 14 yrs Gartree
Pat Maguire Jr, 4 yrs Aylesbury
Vincent Maguire, 5 yrs Aylesbury
Gerry Mealey, 10 yrs Gartree
John Meila, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Joe Mooney (Duffy), 10 yrs Wakefield
Andy Mulryan, 20 yrs Albany
Paddy Mulryan, 20 yrs Albany
James Murphy, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Mick Murray, 12 yrs Wormwood Scrubs
Stevie Nordonne, life Wormwood Scrubs
Paul Norney, life Wakefield
Joe O'Connell, life Parkhurst
Shane O'Doherty, life Wormwood Scrubs
Eddie O'Neill, 20 yrs Gartree
Pat O'Neill, 8 yrs Parkhurst
David Owen, 10 yrs Long Lartin
Billy Power, life Wormwood Scrubs
Delours Price, life Armagh
Marian Price, life Armagh
Michael Reilly, 10 yrs Wakefield
Carole Richardson, indefinite Durham
Phil Sheridan, 10 yrs Exeter
Peter Short, 10 yrs Gartree
Gerry Small, 12 yrs Parkhurst
Sean Smyth, 12 yrs Albany
Peter Toal, 10 yrs Long Lartin
John Walker, life Wakefield
Roy Walsh, life Parkhurst
Judith Ward, life Durham
Gerry Young, 14 yrs Wormwood Scrubs

Shackleton whitewashes Terrorism Act

ON 27 AUGUST, the government published the report of Lord Shackleton into the workings of the Terrorism Act. As expected the report stressed the need for the sweeping powers given the police under the Act as long as 'terrorism' continues.

The Act of course does not apply to the actions of the licensed professional terrorists in the British army.

Under the Act to date, 3,371 people have been held by the police, interned for periods varying from a few hours to 12 days. Of those only 145 have been charged and the Home Office has refused to say how many of those have actually been convicted.

It should be remembered that of those charged only 20 have been charged with any offence under the Act. 132 people have been served with deportation order; of these all except seven have been deported, making a mockery of the 'appeal' procedures under which a deported person is not allowed to know what it is the police suspect him of.

Amongst those deported have been two prisoners, Michael MacLochlainn and Jimmy Young, who were actually in jail at the time the Act was passed — so whatever 'acts of terrorism' they were involved in must have been carried out in jail.

The report points to a 'reduction' in terrorism since the Act was passed in 1974, a ludicrous comment in view of the fact that in the year following the passing of the ACT the ASU which was captured at Balcombe Street waged one of the most successful bombing campaigns ever carried out in this country with immunity.

The Act has in fact been used, as it was intended to be used when it was drafted by a Tory

government and passed by the latest bunch of torturers in the Labour government, as an instrument of political harassment and intimidation.

In the space of two weeks recently Jackie Kaye, secretary of the PAC and Michael Holden, chairman of An Cumann Cabrach, were both held at Heathrow under the PTA. (See article on Michael's arrest in this issue).

This can be seen as nothing less than a crude attempt by the British Special Branch to try to intimidate people working for Irish political prisoners because their political masters and employers, Callaghan, Rees and Mason, are worried about the growing support for PoWs.

The same motive was clearly behind the arrest of Willie Gallagher's father on his way to a London Press conference, a persecution which Brendan Gallagher experienced in Strabane last year when he was arrested no less than 183 times by the Brits.

Shackleton's pathetic 'reforms' — doing away with 12-day detention at ports and abolishing the clause which makes it a crime to withhold information from the police — are of course a mere device to blind us to the fact that the powers of detention, interrogation, isolation, intimidation and deportation remain intact.

OFF THE MARK

THE PUBLICATION of the biography of Sir Rob Mark, recently retired Metropolitan Police Commissioner, reveals the desperation of the average British cop when faced with political opponents.

In an attempt to aggrandize himself and others while relating the tale of the Balcombe Street siege, Mark asserts quite falsely that the members of the IRA captured there surrendered at their behest that the SAS I been brought in.

In fact, the transcripts of police interviews show that four barely exchanged six words with their captors and it was some days before the police could even find out where it had been living.

The campaign of the Balcombe Street ASU and the success of their trial, all of which have been fully documented in *The Irish Prisoner* No.3, obviously dealt a severe blow to the bloated self-esteem of British cops, not least top cop Mark.

Now, three years later, Mark is trying to cover up that humiliation by rewriting history.

A Common British ruling class pastime.

PAC support blocked

WHILE the PAC is receiving increasing numbers of motions of solidarity and support from trade union branches — which will be printed in the next issue — some union branches remain under the pro-imperialist control of the CPGB/Sticky alliance.

A recent meeting of the ACTSS Legal Workers branch was prevented from debating a motion in support of the prisoners by the chairperson, Catherine Scorer. She intervened with a speech to the meeting suggesting that if the demands of the prisoners were met it would lead to their eventual release and she could not go along with this.

Her argument was based on various references to the NCCL, of which she used to be 'Northern Ireland officer', an organisation totally irrelevant to the union meeting.

Ms Scorer, a member of the CPGB, stooped to crude McCarthyism by suggesting that the resolution would only be supported by the IRA.

Eventually, as a result of her wrecking tactics, the motion was

deferred to be debated at another meeting.

With friends like Ms Scorer, the Irish people have no need of the British government.

Needless to say, Ms Scorer saw to it that the branch banner was carried on the pathetic and notorious 'British Life for All' march in London in March which was attended by barely 100 CP stalwarts.

November 26

DAY OF SOLIDARITY with IRISH PoWs




'I will die proudly and triumphantly in defence of Republican principles and the liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people.'

THESE words were spoken by William Allen at the close of his trial in Manchester in November 1867. He, along with Michael O'Brien and Michael Larkin, who were all three to hang, had been framed for the death of a policeman. The trial of the Manchester martyrs is more relevant than ever today when over 2,000 Irish political prisoners are being held in jail for the 'crime' of defending Republican principles.

More particularly here in England 20 men and women, totally innocent of anything except being Irish, have been sentenced to savage terms of imprisonment after being framed by the British police. For some, if these savage sentences are carried out, death will be their only release.

In the last century

Fenianism represented a popular movement, in the words of Karl Marx a 'socialist tendency', in opposition to British rule in Ireland. Today that continues in the struggle led by the Republican movement to free Ireland from British colonial domination.

Those captured in that war are held in the jails and concentration camps of England and Ireland.

Capital punishment is still carried out against these prisoners: Brian Maguire hanged in Castlereagh barracks; Hugh Gerard Coney shot dead in Long Kesh; Tom Smith shot dead in Portlaoise; Michael Gaughan murdered by force feeding in Parkhurst; Proinsias Stagg killed on hunger strike in Wakefield; Noel Jenkinson found 'dead in his cell' in Leicester;

Sean O'Connell painfully killed by an untreated cancer.

All of these men, like the men, women and children shot dead on the streets of their own towns and villages of the Six Counties, would be alive today if it were not for the brutal determination of the ruling classes to maintain their stranglehold on Ireland.

The anniversary of the execution of the Manchester martyrs is a suitable time to remember the deaths of these patriots and to show solidarity with their imprisoned countrymen.

The plight of those dragged before the courts of British imperialism is, if anything, worse today. The trial of the Manchester martyrs was so outrageous that 30 journalists who had

attended it petitioned for a reprieve and a demonstration of over 25,000 workers was organised by Marx to protest at the hangings.

Marx and his daughter Eleanor led a campaign in England and abroad to expose the barbaric treatment of Fenian prisoners.

Today the British media are collaborators with the crimes of their government — the prison conditions in England which have led to the deaths of four Irish prisoners are of no concern to those busy with human rights in other parts of the world.

Protests undertaken with great courage and at great personal risk like those by Irish prisoners in England in July and like the two-year blanket protest by prisoners denied political status in H Block, Long Kesh

demand a response of complete support and solidarity.

O'Brien struck at the heart of the system which oppresses English and Irish alike when he said:

Let them look at London and see the thousands that want bread there, whilst those aristocrats are rioting in luxury and crime and he was prevented by the judge from saying any more.

But we can take up his speech today by raising our voices in solidarity with Irish men and women persecuted for their defence of the liberty of their country.

'I'll die, as many thousands have died for the sake of their beloved land and in defence of it', said Allen. And more will die like him unless all true socialists and anti-imperialists in England

build a true movement solidarity with the Irish freedom struggle.

We ask you to march with us on November 26 in memory of the Manchester martyrs and for all imprisoned Irish patriots.

Call upon your political and trade union organisations to pass this resolution and send us a copy.

We give full support to the right of Irish political prisoners to be treated as Prisoners of War and to the right of those sentenced in England to serve their sentences with their comrades in Ireland.

We shall be supporting the DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH IRISH PRISONERS OF WAR called by the PAC for November 26 and we support the demands of the demonstration.

- Solidarity with Irish PoW's!
- PoW status and Amnesty for all Irish Political Prisoners!
- Brits out of Ireland

MARCH on NOVEMBER 26th

Assemble: 2.30p.m. Speakers Corner Marble Arch

March to Clerkenwell Green